

receiving user input to determine which artists to select from a pool of artists;

determining the market demand for each said selected artist based on users contributing money to a separate fund for each said artist;

identifying artists that attain a predefined money level of user contributions, such that said fund, minus a commission, is provided for the benefit of each artist that attains the predefined money level of user contributions; and

providing users who contributed to artists that did not attain the predefined money level of user contributions an option from a group at least comprising:

- (a) a refund of their money contribution;
- (b) a redistribution of their money contribution to another artist from the pool of artists; and
- (c) to leave their money contribution undistributed in a non-artist account.

2. (Original): A method according to claim 1 wherein said user input is in the form of user votes.

3. (Currently amended): A method according to claim 1 further comprising giving users contributing money to an artist who attains a predefined money level of user contributions a recognition certificate regarding said artist.

4. (Currently amended): A method according to claim 1 further comprising making available to each artist attaining a predefined money level of user contribution, funds from the users' contribution to the artist to produce and commercialize the artist.

5. (Previously presented): A method according to claim 4, further comprising using said funds to produce a record from said funds when said artist is a musician.

6. (Canceled).

7. (Original): A method according to claim 1 further comprising maintaining information on said users, and using said information to market said artist.

8. (Currently amended): A method according to claim 1 comprising limiting the number of users permitted to contribute money to said artist to a predefined number.

9. (Currently amended): An apparatus for determining the market demand for an artist comprising:

means for receiving user input to determine which artists to select from a pool of artists;

means for determining the market demand for each said selected artist based on users contributing money to a separate fund for each said artist;

means for identifying selected artists that attain a predefined money level of user contributions, such that said fund, minus a commission, is provided for the benefit of each artist that attains the predefined money level of user contributions; and

means for providing users who contributed to artists that did not attain the predefined money level of user contributions an option from a group at least comprising:

(a) a refund of their money contribution;

(b) a redistribution of their money contribution to another artist from the pool of artists; and

(c) to leave their money contribution undistributed in a non-artist account.

10. (Currently amended): A method for an artist to obtain financial support comprising:

receiving and storing on a file server a sample of the artist's work;

evaluating the stored artist work from a pool of artists;

selecting an artist based on said artist's work to be eligible for financial contributions from users, wherein the financial contributions are money; and

establishing a fund of any such contributions for an artist who meets a predefined criteria; and

providing users who contributed to artists that did not meet the predefined criteria an option from a group at least comprising:

- (a) a refund of their money contribution;
- (b) a redistribution of their money contribution to another artist from the pool of artists; and
- (c) to leave their money contribution undistributed in a non-artist account.

11. (Original): The method of claim 10 further comprising making the fund available to the artist to produce a musical record.

12. (Original): The method of claim 10 further comprising releasing the fund to the artist based on artist meeting predefined criteria.

13. (Original): The method of claim 10 further comprising returning the selected artist to the pool of artists if artist fails to meet predefined criteria.

14. (Original): The method of claim 10 wherein selecting an artist to be eligible for financial support is based on the artist who attains the largest number of user votes.

15. (Original): The method of claim 10 wherein selecting an artist to be eligible for financial support is determined by a panel of individuals.

16. (Original): The method of claim 10 wherein selecting an artist to be eligible for financial support is determined in part by a panel of individuals and in part by user votes.

17. (Currently amended): A computer implemented system for determining the market demand for an artist comprising:

a file server; and

a processor programmed for implementing instructions for:

receiving and storing user input on said file server to determine which artists to select from a pool of artists;

determining the market demand for each said selected artist based on users contributing money to a separate fund for each said artist; and

identifying artists that attain a predefined money level of user contributions, such that said fund, minus a commission, is provided for the benefit of each artist that attains the predefined money level of user contributions; and

providing users who contributed to artists that did not meet the predefined money level an option from a group at least comprising:

(a) a refund of their money contribution;

(b) a redistribution of their money contribution to another artist from the pool of artists; and

(c) to leave their money contribution undistributed in a non-artist account.

18. (Canceled).

19. (Canceled).

20. (Original): The system of claim 17 further comprising instructions for selecting artists from a pool of artists using inputs from a panel of individuals.

21. (Original): The system of claim 17 wherein the number of artists that can be selected to receive financial support from the pool of artists is predefined.

22. (Currently amended): A computer implemented system for presenting artists to determine market demand for artists comprising a computer programmed having instructions for implementing the method of:

receiving and storing work of artists on a file server;

dividing said work into categories;

selecting said work from said categories;

elevating selected works into positions that are eligible to receive direct financial support from users, wherein the financial support is money; and

promoting the artists who receive a predefined amount of direct financial contributions;
and

providing users who contributed to artists that did not meet the predefined amount an option from a group at least comprising:

(a) a refund of their money contribution;

(b) a redistribution of their money contribution to another artist; and

(c) to leave their money contribution undistributed in a non-artist account.

23. (Original): The system of claim 22 comprising instructions for limiting the number of positions available to receive financial contributions from users.

24. (Currently amended): An article comprising a computer-readable medium that stores computer-executable instructions for causing a computer system to:

receive user input to determine which artists to select from a pool of artists;

determine the market demand for each said selected artist based on users contributing money to a separate fund for each said artist;

identify artists that attain a predefined money level of user contributions, such that said fund, minus a commission, is provided for the benefit of each artist that attains the predefined money level of user contributions; and

provide users who contributed to artists that did not meet the predefined amount an option from a group at least comprising:

(a) a refund of their money contribution;

(b) a redistribution of their money contribution to another artist from the pool of artists; and

(c) to leave their money contribution undistributed in a non-artist account.

25. (Original): The article of claim 24 wherein users select and contribute to an artist through a network connection.

26. (Currently amended): A computer implemented apparatus for determining market demand for an artist comprising:

means for receiving and storing works of artists;

means for enabling users to access the stored works;

means for receiving user input to elevate artist from the general artist pool;

means for making elevated artists eligible for financial contributions from users, wherein the financial contributions are money;

means for making financial contributions from users, wherein the financial contributions are money, available to artists that meet predefined criteria; and

means for providing users who contributed to artists that did not meet the predefined criteria an option from a group at least comprising:

- (a) a refund of their money contribution;
- (b) a redistribution of their money contribution to another artist from the general artist pool; and
- (c) to leave their money contribution undistributed in a non-artist account.

27. (Currently amended): A method for determining the market demand for an artist, said method comprising:

receiving input from a plurality of users to at least one of a plurality of artists;

selecting at least one artist from said plurality of artists to receive financial contributions from said plurality of users; and

identifying from said plurality of artists at least one artist that receives a predefined amount of financial contributions, wherein said financial contributions are not in exchange for artist merchandise and providing the financial contributions, minus a commission, for the benefit of the artist that has received the predefined amount of financial contributions, wherein the financial contributions are money; and

providing users who contributed to artists that did not meet the predefined amount of financial contributions an option from a group at least comprising:

- (a) a refund of their money contribution;
- (b) a redistribution of their money contribution to another artist from the general artist pool; and
- (c) to leave their money contribution undistributed in a non-artist account.